

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 251400Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5796
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 0217

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, AG
SUBJECT: BOUMEDIENE ANNOINTED -- SO WHAT?

1. SUMMARY: BOUMEDIENE REGIME IS INVESTING ONE YEAR
OF ITS POLITICAL LIFE, PERHAPS MORE, IN CREATION OF
"INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY" TO REPLACE FADED "REVOLUTIONARY
LEGITIMACY" CONFERRED BY 1965 COUP AND FADING "ECONOMIC
LEGITIMACY" CONFERRED BY REGIME'S COMMITMENT TO RAPID ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT. AS ECONOMIC PROGRESS HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO
BUREAUCRACY, INFLATION, AND LACK OF SKILLED MANPOWER, AND
AS QUALITY OF LIFE HAS CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE, AWARE
ALGERIANS, ESPECIALLY TECHNOCRATS, HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY
DISILLUSIONED. BY EMBARKING ON PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION,
BOUMEDIENE IS ATTEMPTING TO ACQUIRE RATIFICATION OF HIS STEWARD-
SHIP AS HE WORKS TO REVITALIZE REGIME. ALTHOUGH IN PROCESS HE IS
CHOOSING MEANS DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE INEVITABLY UNSETTLING EFFECT
PROCESS IS HAVING ON ALGERIAN POWER GROUPINGS, HE IS NONE-
THELESS FINDING HIMSELF UNABLE TO SATISFY
FULLY ALL THE VARIOUS POWER GROUPS WITHIN POLITICAL SYSTEM. WHILE
FOR MOMENT, BOUMEDIENE SEEMS TO HAVE SWEEPED POLITICAL
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BOARD, HE HAS AT SAME TIME BECOME MORE VULNERABLE,
BECAUSE HE HAS ACCEPTED FORMAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING
ALGERIA'S PROBLEMS. SUCCESS OF HIS GAMBLE DEPENDS ON HOW
SUCCESSFULLY AND QUICKLY HE CAN DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS IN RESOLVING
ALGERIA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. TO MAXIMIZE HIS CHANCES, HE WILL,
FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE, REFOCUS ALGERIAN POLICY TO CONCENTRATE
ON INTERNAL PROBLEMS. INTERNATIONALLY, ALGERIA WILL

BE MORE AN IRRITANT THAN A SERIOUS PROTAGONIST. END SUMMARY.

2. REFERENDA AND ELECTIONS OVER PAST NINE MONTHS HAVE ENDOWED ALGERIA WITH NATIONAL CHARTER, CONSTITUTION, AND PRESIDENT; FOURTH EXERCISE IN FEBRUARY WILL ADD NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF REGIME IN THIS FASHION HAS PREOCCUPIED BOUMEDIENE AND OTHER REGIME FIGURES, MEDIA, BUREAUCRATS. ALGERIAN INVOLVEMENT IN OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS SAHARA, INDUSTRIALIZATION, NIEO, ETC. SEEMS TO HAVE CONTINUED MAINLY ON MOMENTUM.

3. QUESTIONS EMERGE FROM THESE EVENTS OF PAST NINE MONTHS. WHY DID BOUMEDIENE BELIEVE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF HIS REGIME IN THIS WAY NECESSARY? WHAT HAS CHANGED IN ALGERIA AS RESULT? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

4. WHY: POLITICAL EXERCISES OCCURRED BECAUSE BOUMEDIENE BELIEVED HE AND HIS REGIME NEEDED POPULARLY-RATIFIED "INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY". "REVOLUTIONARY LEGITIMACY" OF HIS 1965 COUP D'ETAT HAD FADED AFTER OVER TEN YEARS. LACK OF POPULAR BLESSING PROVIDED EXPOSED POINT FOR HIS CRITICS TO TARGET AND PRESUMABLY WAS MINOR INTERNATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT, ESPECIALLY AS EVEN HASSAN APPEARED TO BE MOVING FITFULLY TOWARD ELECTIONS. EROSION OF PRINCIPLE OF COLLEGIALITY OF COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION OVER PAST TEN YEARS HAD REMOVED FACADE OF ELITE UNITY WHICH HAD PROVIDED SEMBLANCE OF ENDORSEMENT TO BOUMEDIENE CONTROL.

3. IN ADDITION, REGIME HAD LONG PROCLAIMED THAT ECONOMIC

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PROGRESS REQUIRED STABILITY AND AUTHORITY AND THAT INSTITUTION BUILDING HAD TO WAIT. THIS "ECONOMIC LEGITIMACY" HAS FADED WITH INCREASING BUREAUCRATIZATION, RISING INFLATION, DECLINE IN LIFE QUALITY AND FRUSTRATION AT STAGNATING INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

6. FINALLY, LATTER FRUSTRATIONS CREATED INCREASING IMPRESSION OF LOSS OF INTERNAL MOMENTUM OF SOCIETY AND REGIME. AWARE ALGERIANS, ESPECIALLY TECHNOCRATS, WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED WITH LACK OF PROGRESS, ETHOS, AND DRIVE ON PART OF REGIME. IN THIS CONTEXT, INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROCESS CONVEYED APPEARANCE OF MOTION, PRODUCED SERIES OF NEW INSTITUTIONS AND AN ALLEGEDLY STRENGTHENED PARTY TO PLACATE AND PERHAPS COOPT SOME OF DISSAFFECTED AND, THROUGH CHARTER AND HOOPLA ATTENDANT REFERENDA, CREATED AT LEAST ILLUSION OF RE-DEDICATION OF ELITE AND POPULAR MASSES.

7. HOW: PROCESS OF LEGITIMIZING AND REVITALIZING REGIME ESTABLISHED BY COUP POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS EXERCISE AS IT

UNSETTLED POWER GROUPINGS WHICH HAD EVOLVED DURING PAST TEN YEARS. FOR PROCESS TO PROCEED SMOOTHLY REQUIRED CONSENSUS ON MEN, POWER AND POLICIES. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY'S PERCEPTION OF INTERNAL WORKING OF REGIME LIMITED, THERE ARE INDICATIONS BOUMEDIENE DISCOVERED THIS CONSENSUS DID NOT EXIST.

A. BOUMEDIENE, AFTER HAVING FOR TEN YEARS PREACHED NECESSITY OF BUILDING FROM BASE UP AND HAVING LAID GROUNDWORK WITH COMMUNE AND DAIRA ELECTIONS, SUDDENLY REVERSED HIMSELF AND PROCESS. INSTEAD OF PROCEEDING BY REORGANIZING FLN AND BUILDING THROUGH IT BY ELECTING REPRESENTATIVES, CREATING CONSTITUTION AND ELECTING PRESIDENT, BOUMEDIENE IMPOSED FROM TOP DOWN. AFTER CHARTER, HE WENT STRAIGHT TO REGIME-DRAFTED CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN TURN. FLN CONGRESS TO BE HELD ONLY "LATE THIS YEAR" AND 1978 DATE ALREADY BEING BRUITED.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ALGIERS 0217

B. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE NATIONAL CHARTER WAS ADDED TO BEGINNING OF PROCESS ONLY AT LAST MINUTE IN RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION FIGURES WHO DECRIED LACK OF FREEDOMS. WHATEVER

CAUSE, MARCH 1976 APPEAL FROM PREVIOUSLY QUIESCENT OPPOSITION FIGURES AND DIMENSIONS OF FREE DISCUSSIONS ATTENANT CHARTER DEBATE SUGGESTED MORE DIVERSITY AND DISCONTENT THAN EXPECTED.

C. CONSTITUTION ENDOWING PRESIDENT WITH ENLARGED THEORETICAL POWERS DID NOT PASS EASILY. ITS VERY PUBLICATION WAS DELAYED BY LENGTHY COUNCIL OF THE REVOLUTION DISCUSSIONS. CERTAIN FIGURES, SUCH AS GENDARMERIE COMMANDER BENCHERIF AND SECOND MILITARY REGION COMMANDER CHADLY, WERE REPORTEDLY OUTSPOKEN IN RESISTANCE.

8. IN SHORT, "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" PROCESS SUGGESTS THAT NO CONSENSUS EXISTS AMONG REGIME LEADERSHIP AND THAT BOUMEDIENE STILL HAS TO RECKON WITH UNRECONCILED FORCES. AMONG IDENTIFIABLE MAVERICKS ARE CHIEFS OF FIEFDOMS WHO WISH TO REMAIN UNDISTURBED, MUSLIM TRADITIONALISTS WHO WISH GREATER ORTHODOXY, AND AGRICULTURAL

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BOURGEOIS WHO RESIST AGRARIAN REFORM. FURTHERMORE, WILE CHARTER CONTENT AND RHETORIC ACCOMPANYING WHOLE PROCESS MAY HAVE TEMPORARILY REVIVED FLAGGING DEDICATION STAGNATING DEVELOPMENT AND DISILLUSIONED TECHNOCRATS AWAIT CONCRETE STEPS.

9. SO WHAT: NEVERTHELESS, AS END OF RATIFICATION RPROCESS APPROACHES, BOUMEDIENE APPEARS TO HAVE SWEEPED POLITICAL POWER BOARD. DEMONSTRATIONS OF MASSIVE POPULAR SUPPORT HAVE BEEN DULY ARRANGED, HE OSTENSIBLY ENJOYS UNLIMITED CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS, AND HIS "OPTION SOCIALISTE" HAS BEEN ENDORSED. DUTIFUL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY EMERGING ON HORIZON.

10. YET AT SAME TIME HE NOW MORE VULNERABLE. HE HAS ACHIEVED RATIFICATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS POLICY AT COST OF ALLOWING CULT OF PERSONALITY TO DEVELOP, WHICH LEAVES HIM ACCEPTING PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING ALGERIA'S PROBLEMS. WHAT LEFT OF COLLEGIAL FACADE FADING RAPIDLY. IN SURFACING VICE PRESIDENT AND PREMIER, HE MAY TRY SET UP STALKING HORSE AND TO FADE INTO BACKGROUND IN ROLE OF A GREAT HELMSMAN. EVEN SHOULD HE TRY SUCH GAME, HOWEVER, REFERENDA AND ELECTION PROCESS HIGHLIGHTED HIM TOO MUCH TO MAKE SUCH GAME FEASIBLE. BOUMEDIENE APPEARS TO BE BETTING THAT HE CAN REVITALIZE REGIME AND DEAL WITH ALGERIA'S PROBLEMS ADEQUATELY ENOUGH TO OBTAIN "ECONOMIC LEGITIMACY" AND THUS PREVENT SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION ARISING FROM RESENTMENT OF COHORTS, DISILLUSIONMENT OF TECHNOCRATS, AND/OR POPULAR DISAFFECTION.

11. ULTIMATELY BOUMEDIENE WILL BE REPLACED ONLY WHEN ARMY

ACTS, AND ALL WE KNOW -- WHICH IS LITTLE -- INDICATES IT NOT NOW MOVING. ARMY, HOWEVER, EMERGED FROM REVOLUTION AND IS INTERTWINED WITH FABRIC OF SOCIETY. RISK BOUMEDIENE IS RUNNING IS THAT POPULAR DISCONTENT OVER DEGRADATION OF LIVING STANDARDS WILL IMMEDIATELY PERMEATE ARMY AND PROVIDE IMPETUS FOR DISILLUSIONED, DISGRUNTLED, OR AMBITIOUS TO ACT.
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12. WHAT'S NEXT: HIS AWARENESS OF HIS VULNERABILITY APPEARS LIKELY TO DETERMINE FOCUS OF ALGERIAN POLICY IN NEAR FUTURE AS IT REQUIRES CONCENTRATION ON RESOLVING INTERNAL PROBLEMS. THUS, YEAR UNLIKELY TO SEE BOUMEDIENE AND ALGERIA RESUME PAST PROMINENT ROLE IN SUCH QUESTIONS AS MIDDLE EAST, CIEC, NIEO, NON-ALIGNMENT, SOUTHERN AFRICA. OBNOXIOUS INTERNATIONAL GADFLIES THEY WILL REMAIN, BUT MORE AS IRRITANTS THAN AS SERIOUS PROTAGONISTS.

13. EVERYONE OBSERVES THAT BOUMEDIENE SHOULD EEP-SIX HIS UNPOPULAR SAHARA POLICY IN ORDER TO FREE TIME AND RESOURCES; NO ONE EXPECTS HIM TO DO SO. EX-CATHEDRA RESOLUTION OF ISSUE VIA SUCH ROUTES AS SAUDI MEDIATION WILL REMAIN POSSIBILITY, BUT FOR TIME BEING BOUMEDIENE'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO POLICY FOR MOTIVES WHICH REMAIN UNCLEAR BUT WHICH APPEAR DOMINATED BY CONVICTION MAGHREB NO LONGER BIG ENOUGH FOR HIM AND HASSAN SEEMS LIKELY TO KEEP ALGERIANS BEHIND SAHRAOUI.

14. HIS VULNERABILITY, HIS INGRAINED PATIENCE, AND HIS RECOGNITION OF INFLUENCES OUTSIDE HIS CONTROL APPEAR LIKELY TO LEAD BOUMEDIENE TO MOVE GLACIALLY AGAINST HIS COLLEAGUES. HE CANNOT, HOWEVER, AFFORD TO MOVE SLOWLY AGAINST ALGERIA'S PROBLEMS. STANDARD ISSUES OF BUREAUCRATIC STRANGULATION OF DEVELOPMENT, PAYMENTS DIFFICULTIES, SKYROCKETING POPULATION GROWTH RATE, STAGNATING AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ARE CURRENTLY EXACERBATED BY INCREASED INFLATION WHICH IS SHARPLY ERODING POPULAR LIVING STANDARDS. BOUMEDIENE HAS WON THE INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY AND POWER HE SOUGHT IN ELECTIONS; HE NOW HAS TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES HE ASSUMED WHILE VULTURES -- AT HOME AND ABROAD -- WAIT FOR FILURE.LYNE

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